(b) The Government continue to make active efforts to mobilise support for India becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council. Besides actively participating in the UN debates on Security Council reform, the Government continue to follow up this issue with various countries.

Bilateral talks with Pakistan

20. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Pakistan have resumed bilateral talks in the month of October, 2007 and discussed on nuclear CBMS and joint anti-terror mechanism;

(b) if so, the outcome of the talks held; and

(c) to what extent both Governments have taken steps to implement them ?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Yes. The fifth round of India-Pakistan expert-level talks on Nuclear CBMs was held in New Delhi on 19 October, 2007. Discussions focussed on a review of the implementation of existing agreements on CBMs and on disarmament and non-proliferation related issues of mutual interest in multilateral forums as provided for in the Lahore Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) of 1999. The two sides agreed to meet in Islamabad next to carry forward the dialogue and the process of nuclear CBMs.

The second meeting of the Anti-Terrorissm Mechanism was held in New Delhi on 22nd October, 2007. The two sides reviewed the follow up steps taken on the information shared during the first meeting of the Joint Anti Terrorism Mechanism held in Islamabad on 6th March, 2007 and in the intervening period. Both sides shared new information on terrorist incidents including those, which have occurred since the last meeting . They agreed to continue to work to identify measures exchange specific information and assist in investigations.

GSM visa rules of Australia

21. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that due to General Skilled Migration (GSM) visa rules in Australia that came into effect from 1st September, 2007, future of thousands of overseas Indian students enrolled in various Australian Universities has become uncertain as they would not be able to get permanent residence on completion of their existing courses;

(b) if so, whether Government have taken up matter with Australia to impress upon them and ensure that new visa rules do not become operative retrospectively;

(c) if so, reaction of Government of Australia in the matter; and

(d) if not , the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) The General Skilled Migration Programme of Australia was reformed w.e.f. September 1, 2007. The key change in the rules was that onshore applicants for general skilled migration would be required to demonstrate skilled work experience for the relevant period specified by the migration regulations. Graduates from all countries including India, will be able to apply for temporary work visa for a period stipulated under the rules to gain the relevant work experience, after

which they may apply for permanent skilled migration . When applying for permanent skilled migration, they will need to demonstrate a higher level of English proficiency than that required earlier.

(b) No.

(c) and (d) Do not arise,

Plight of Indian workers abroad

22. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN : Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that thousands of Indian and other immigrant workers had protested against their employers for low wages, forced labour and torture by their employers;

(b) whether many of them were arrested and put on wrongful confinement and were not provided any-legal aid;

(c) whether our embassy in Dubai talked to the concerned authorities about the plight of Indian workers; and

(d) if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, Sir. About 4300 workers of Pauling Middle East Company on 28.10.07 and about 35000 workers of Arabtec Construction Company in UAE had gone on strike from 1.11.07 demanding increase in salary etc.

(b) to (d) In case of M/s Pauling Middle East Company out of 4300 workers detained by police authorities 4141 workers have been released and rejoined work. There were about 90 Indians detained for investigation for violence out of which 87 were sent back to India. 3 Indians are still under detention and are awaiting the final decision of UAE authorities. Consulate officials are in touch with UAE authorities for their release and return to India. In the case of M/s Arabtec Construction Company, most of the workers resumed work after the company announced an increase in salary on 10.11.07. Around 500 workers from various nationalities who tried to stop others from going to work were arrested. The Consulate officials are providing all possible assistance to these workers.

Indians working in Dubai

23. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of Indians working in Dubai were arrested by the Dubai Authorities;

(b) whether Government had approached the Dubai authorities in this regard;

(c) the stand taken by Government in this regard;

(d) the response of the Dubai authorities; and

(e) the details of the decisions taken by the Dubai authorities regarding the arrested Indians?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, Sir. Initially, around 4300 workers of M/s Pauling Middle East Company, Dubai, who had gone on protest against the company demanding higher salary etc., of whom a large number were